

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, SY

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS--COUNTRY EVALUATION PLAN FOR SYRIA

REF: STATE 133681

FOLLOWING FOR YOUR REVIEW AND COMMENT IS NEA/ARN'S DRAFT
COUNTRY EVALUATION PLAN WITH REGARD TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS
SITUATION IN SYRIA. PLEASE REPORT REACTIONS SOONEST.
BEGIN TEXT:

A. CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SYRIA

1. INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON

SYRIANS ENJOY CONSTITUTIONALLY-GUARANTEED RIGHTS TO LIFE,
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LIBERTY AND SECURITY OF PERSON. IN PRACTICE, HOWEVER,
THERE HAVE BEEN AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF INSTANCES, USUALLY
INVOLVING PERSONS ARRESTED ON POLITICAL OR SECURITY
GROUNDS, IN WHICH SUCH RIGHTS HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED OR
IGNORED. ALTHOUGH THE FREQUENCY OF SUCH ACTIONS IS
UNDENIABLY LOWER UNDER THE ASSAD REGIME THAN IT WAS DURING
EARLIER SYRIAN REGIMES, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT SYRIAN

SECURITY AUTHORITIES HAVE CONSIDERABLE LATITUDE IN THEIR TREATMENT OF PERSONS DETAINED FOR POLITICAL OR SECURITY

REASONS. THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT DIVULGE DETAILS ON THE NUMBER AND IDENTITIES OF PEOPLE SO DETAINED, OR ON THE CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST THEM.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, IN ITS 1975-76 ANNUAL REPORT, PLACED THE NUMBER OF PERSONS KNOWN TO BE DETAINED WITHOUT TRIAL IN SYRIA AT 286, SOME OF WHOM IT BELIEVED HAD BEEN IN CUSTODY FOR UP TO FIVE YEARS. AI DESCRIBED THIS PRACTICE AS THE PREDOMINANT FEATURE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN SYRIA. WE KNOW OF ONE U.S. CITIZEN WHO WAS HELD INCOMMUNICADO--APPARENTLY ON SECURITY GROUNDS--FOR ALMOST EIGHT WEEKS IN AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1976, AND OF ANOTHER WHO ASSERTED HE HAD BEEN SIMILARLY DETAINED FOR 15 DAYS IN OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1975. AN AUSTRIAN NATIONAL WAS INCARCERATED AND HELD INCOMMUNICADO FROM APRIL 1976 UNTIL MAY 1977.

THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN REPORTS, SELDOM FIRSTHAND OR VERIFIABLE, THAT PERSONS SUSPECTED OF ESPIONAGE OR OTHER SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN THREATENED WITH TORTURE OR, IN SOME CASES, ACTUALLY TORTURED. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL EXPRESSED GRAVE CONCERN OVER SUCH REPORTS IN ITS 1975-76 ANNUAL REPORT, NOTING ALLEGATIONS REGARDING THE DEATHS OF FOUR PERSONS AS THE RESULT OF TORTURE DURING THAT PERIOD. WE KNOW OF ONE FOREIGN NATIONAL (NOT AN AMERICAN) WHO CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN THREATENED WITH TORTURE

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DURING HIS INTERROGATION BY SYRIAN SECURITY OFFICIALS IN 1975.

IN OTHER RESPECTS, THE SYRIAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM GENERALLY PROVIDES FAIR TRIALS TO OFFENDERS, AND SYRIAN CITIZENS CAN OBTAIN REMEDY FROM THE COURTS IF THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS ARE VIOLATED.

2. CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES

THE RIGHT TO OWN PROPERTY IN SYRIA IS RESPECTED. ALTHOUGH THE COUNTRY IS PREDOMINANTLY MUSLIM, ITS CHRISTIAN, DRUZE AND JEWISH MINORITIES ARE PERMITTED TO PRACTICE THEIR FAITHS FREELY. WHILE THERE ARE NO SPECIFIC RESTRICTIONS AGAINST FREEDOM OF SPEECH OR ASSEMBLY, THERE ARE PRACTICAL LIMITATIONS ARISING FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN TO PRESERVE INTERNAL SECURITY AND PROVIDE FOR THE NATIONAL DEFENSE, MATTERS WHICH SYRIAN SECURITY AGENCIES ARE APT TO DEFINE RATHER BROADLY. THE GOVERNMENT OWNS

THE RADIO AND TELEVISION, AND IT CLOSELY SUPERVISES THE PRESS.

SYRIA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY, WHICH TODAY NUMBERS ABOUT 5,300 PERSONS, WAS SUBJECTED TO DISCRIMINATORY GOVERNMENTAL RESTRICTIONS AND OCCASIONAL HARASSMENT THROUGHOUT THE 1950'S AND 60'S. JEWS WERE NOT ALLOWED TO EMIGRATE FROM THE COUNTRY, STRICT LIMITATIONS WERE PLACED ON THEIR ABILITY TO TRAVEL INTERNALLY, THEIR RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION WAS PROMINENTLY INSCRIBED ON THEIR SYRIAN IDENTITY DOCUMENTS, THEY COULD SELDOM GAIN ADMITTANCE TO SYRIAN UNIVERSITIES, THEIR BUSINESSES WERE NOT GRANTED IMPORT-EXPORT LICENSES, THEIR RIGHT TO SELL OR OTHERWISE TRANSFER PROPERTY WAS CIRCUMSCRIBED, AND THEY WERE GENERALLY DENIED OPPORTUNITIES FOR GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYMENT.

WE HAD LONG BEEN CONCERNED OVER THIS SITUATION AND, PRIOR
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TO THE RESUMPTION OF FORMAL U.S.-SYRIAN RELATIONS IN MID-1974, TRIED TO DO WHAT WE COULD TO AMELIORATE IT THROUGH VARIOUS INDIRECT DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS. SINCE 1974, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE OUR CONCERN KNOWN TO THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT DIRECTLY, USING QUIET BUT PERSISTENT DIPLOMACY. IN THESE EFFORTS, WE CONSULT CLOSELY WITH VARIOUS AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS AND INTERESTED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS. ALL CONCERNED RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT THE NEED FOR DISCRETION IN HANDLING THIS SENSITIVE SUBJECT, PARTICULARLY THE NEED TO AVOID PUBLICITY WHICH MIGHT EMBARRASS THE EFFORTS OF SYRIAN LEADERS TO EASE THE SITUATION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY.

OUR EFFORTS BEGAN TO PAY DIVIDENDS. FROM 1974 THROUGH 1976, SOME OF THE MORE ONEROUS RESTRICTIONS LONG IMPOSED ON JEWS IN SYRIA WERE GRADUALLY RELAXED. MORE RECENTLY, A SERIES OF UNPUBLICIZED HIGH-LEVEL GOVERNMENT DECREES IN LATE 1976 AND EARLY 1977 HAVE ELIMINATED VIRTUALLY ALL OFFICIALLY-SPONSORED FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SYRIA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY. UNDER THESE NEW REGULATIONS, JEWS ARE NO LONGER REQUIRED TO HAVE THEIR RELIGION STAMPED PROMINENTLY ON THEIR SYRIAN IDENTITY CARDS, A PRACTICE DISCONTINUED SOME YEARS AGO IN THE CASE OF NON-JEWS. RESTRICTIONS ON JEWISH MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY HAVE LARGELY BEEN ENDED. JEWS CAN HOLD GOVERNMENT JOBS, AND JEWISH MERCHANTS ARE NOW ALLOWED TO IMPORT AND EXPORT GOODS, IN THE SAME MANNER AS OTHER SYRIANS. JEWISH SCHOOLS ARE TO BE TREATED EQUALLY WITH OTHER PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN SYRIA; JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS WILL BE INVITED TO ATTEND OFFICIAL CEREMONIES; AND JEWISH STUDENTS WILL BE ADMITTED TO SYRIAN UNIVERSITIES UNDER THE SAME

CONDITIONS THAT APPLY TO OTHER SYRIANS. IN ADDITION, SYRIAN JEWS MAY BEQUEATH OR INHERIT PROPERTY IN THE SAME MANNER AS OTHER CITIZENS, RESTRICTIONS ON THEIR ABILITY TO OBTAIN OR TRANSFER PROPERTY DEEDS AND OTHER TITLE DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN LIFTED, AND THE SUPREME GOVERNMENTAL

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COMMITTEE THAT EXISTED TO SUPERVISE JEWISH AFFAIRS HAS BEEN ABOLISHED. MOREOVER, SYRIAN JEWS WILL MORE READILY OBTAIN PASSPORTS TO TRAVEL ABROAD. (ANY SYRIAN WISHING TO LEAVE HIS COUNTRY MUST OBTAIN A PASSPORT, WHICH MIGHT OR MIGHT NOT BE GRANTED FOR ANY NUMBER OF REASONS, USUALLY MILITARY SERVICE REQUIREMENTS). ANY SYRIAN CAN BE REQUIRED TO POST A BOND WHICH WOULD BE FORFEITED IN CASE OF NON-RETURN. THE AMOUNT OF SUCH BONDS IS TO BE SET ACCORDING TO THE FINANCIAL OR SOCIAL SITUATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL. IN THE CASE OF JEWISH NON-RETURNEES, SUCH BONDS AS THEY HAD BEEN REQUIRED TO POST WOULD BE FORFEITED.

WHILE A GENERAL PROHIBITION AGAINST JEWISH EMIGRATION FROM SYRIA REMAINS IN FORCE, UNMARRIED JEWISH WOMEN CAN APPLY TO MARRY DESIGNATED FOREIGNERS AND OBTAIN PASSPORTS TO JOIN THEIR FIANCEES ABROAD. SYRIAN JEWISH WOMEN WHO HAVE SECRETLY MARRIED FOREIGNERS CAN NOW REGISTER THEIR MARRIAGES WITHOUT PENALTY AND, AFTER REGISTRATION, OBTAIN PASSPORTS TO TRAVEL TO JOIN THEIR SPOUSES WITHOUT HAVING TO POST BONDS.

A SENIOR SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL, IN INFORMING AMBASSADOR MURPHY OF THESE NEW REGULATIONS ON JANUARY 10, INDICATED THAT THE SITUATION OF SYRIAN JEWS FROM THE STANDPOINT OF HUMAN RIGHTS WILL HENCEFORTH BE ALMOST THE SAME AS FOR OTHER SYRIANS, EVEN TO THE POINT OF ALLOWING LIMITED EMIGRATION UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. WHILE IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO OBSERVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE LATEST RELAXATIONS BEFORE A FINAL JUDGMENT CAN BE MADE, THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO HAVE MADE AN IMPORTANT GESTURE IN THE DIRECTION OF AN EFFECTIVE SOLUTION OF THE SYRIAN JEWISH QUESTION, WITH ASSAD GOING AS FAR AS HE CAN AT THIS JUNCTURE TOWARD PERMITTING--WITHOUT ACTUALLY SAYING SO PUBLICLY--LIMITED JEWISH EMIGRATION FROM SYRIA.

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3. BASIC NEEDS

IN THE SIX AND A HALF YEARS THAT HAVE ELAPSED SINCE THE ASSAD REGIME TOOK POWER IN SYRIA, THE COUNTRY HAS EXPERIENCED NOTEWORTHY ADVANCES IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND IN ITS INTERNAL POLITICAL STABILITY. ALTHOUGH THE PACE OF SYRIA'S AMBITIOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS HAS LATELY BEEN RETARDED BY ITS COSTLY INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON, ITS NEED TO RETAIN A SIGNIFICANT MILITARY CAPABILITY VIS-A-VIS ISRAEL, AND ITS CONTINUING BITTER FEUD WITH IRAQ, PRESIDENT ASSAD REMAINS ANXIOUS TO GET ON WITH THE TASK OF DIRECTING SYRIA'S NATIONAL ENERGIES MORE AND MORE TOWARD THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE HIGHER STANDARDS OF LIVING INCREASINGLY DEMANDED BY HIS COUNTRYMEN. THE MAJOR

FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO THIS TREND WILL OF COURSE BE THE DEGREE TO WHICH PROGRESS CAN BE MADE TOWARD A PEACEFUL, NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT. EVEN SO, THE ASSAD REGIME'S PERFORMANCE TO DATE IN IMPROVING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN SYRIA HAS BEEN IMPRESSIVE.

4. GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

THE ASSAD REGIME IS TOTALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR SYRIA'S CURRENT HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD AS OUTLINED ABOVE, BOTH IN AREAS WHERE MARKED IMPROVEMENTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE (IN COMPARISON WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF PREVIOUS SYRIAN GOVERNMENTS) AND IN OTHER AREAS (E.G., THE TREATMENT OF PERSONS DETAINED ON POLITICAL OR SECURITY GROUNDS) WHERE POSITIVE PROGRESS IS NOT EVIDENT. IT VIEWS ITS SHORT-COMINGS IN THE LATTER AREAS AS NECESSARY TO PRESERVE EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION IN WHAT HISTORICALLY HAS BEEN A TURBULENT COUNTRY, AS WELL AS TO MAINTAIN A CREDIBLE NATIONAL DEFENSE CAPABILITY IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FACE OF EXTERNAL ENEMIES. (IN ADDITION TO ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE ARAB STRUGGLE WITH ISRAEL, SYRIA IS ENGAGED IN A BITTERLY HOSTILE POLITICO-IDEOLOGICAL COMPETITION WITH THE RIVAL BAATHIST REGIME IN IRAQ, WHICH APPEARS COMMITTED TO THE OVERTHROW OF THE ASSAD REGIME BY ALL AVAILABLE MEANS, INCLUDING SUBVERSION, ASSASSINATION, AND THE FOMENTING OF POPULAR UNREST IN SYRIA.)

5. REACTION TO ADVERSE HUMAN RIGHTS ALLEGATIONS

THE ASSAD REGIME IS HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO CRITICISM OF ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD AND TENDS TO REGARD ADVERSE ALLEGATIONS AS HOSTILE CHALLENGES. IT INVARIABLY REACTS

BY REJECTING THEM SUMMARILY OR, IN CONNECTION WITH REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED FROM AGENCIES SUCH AS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, BY SIMPLY IGNORING THEM ENTIRELY.

B. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. U.S. OBJECTIVES (IN ORDER OF PRIORITY)

--SECURE AT LEAST A LIMITED LIFTING OF THE BAN ON EMIGRATION FOR SYRIAN JEWRY.

--SEEK EITHER EARLY SYRIAN AGREEMENT TO A U.S.-SYRIAN CONSULAR CONVENTION OR SYRIA'S ADHERENCE TO THE VIENNA CONVENTION, SO AS TO HELP ASSURE DUE PROCESS AND PROMPT NOTIFICATION TO OUR EMBASSY IN CASES INVOLVING THE DETENTION OF U.S. CITIZENS.

--ENCOURAGE THE ASSAD REGIME TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE LEGAL SAFEGUARDS FOR PERSONS DETAINED ON SECURITY OR POLITICAL GROUNDS.

(A) IMPORTANCE: A FURTHER ALLEVIATION OF THE SITUATION OF SYRIA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY SHOULD BE OUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE
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FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, AS WELL AS OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS. THIS OBJECTIVE HAS AN OBVIOUS INTRINSIC IMPORTANCE FROM THE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDPOINT. IT IS ALSO HIGHLY IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, FROM THE TWIN STANDPOINTS OF IMPROVING U.S.-SYRIAN RELATIONS AND BUILDING MINIMAL CONFIDENCE BETWEEN SYRIA AND ISRAEL--FACTORS WHICH ARE BOTH ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF OUR MIDEAST PEACEMAKING EFFORTS.

OF SECONDARY, BUT BY NO MEANS NEGLIGIBLE, IMPORTANCE IS THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF BETTER SYRIAN OBSERVANCE OF DUE PROCESS FOR PERSONS ARRESTED ON POLITICAL/SECURITY GROUNDS. SYRIAN ADHERENCE TO THE VIENNA CONVENTION, IN PARTICULAR, WOULD HELP US ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY OF INTERESTS WITH THE ASSAD REGIME IN ADVANCING THE CAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS INTERNATIONALLY. THESE OBJECTIVES WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO BE ADDRESSED OVER A LONGER TERM, I.E., 12 MONTHS OR MORE.

(B) FEASIBILITY: ALTHOUGH THE DOORS TO UNLIMITED EMIGRATION BY SYRIAN JEWRY WILL PROBABLY OPEN FULLY ONLY WHEN A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE HAS BEEN NEGOTIATED, WE DO NOT RULE OUT FURTHER PROGRESS TOWARD LIMITED EMIGRATION IN THE MEANTIME--PARTICULARLY IN THE CASE OF UNMARRIED JEWISH WOMEN OR OTHER SYRIAN JEWS WHO SEEK TO BE REUNITED WITH THEIR RELATIVES IN THE U.S. ASSAD HAS INDICATED HE WOULD GIVE SYMPATHETIC ATTENTION

ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS TO JEWS WISHING TO EMIGRATE TO THE U.S. FOR A SPECIFIC AND JUSTIFIABLE REASON (I.E., TO JOIN A FIANCE).

IT IS PROBABLY UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT EARLY IMPROVEMENT IN THE DAMASCUS GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF POLITICAL OR SECURITY DETENTION CASES, GIVEN THE UNSETTLED AND VOLATILE NATURE OF MIDDLE EASTERN POLITICS AND THE CONSEQUENT INSECURITIES SENSED BY THE SYRIAN LEADERSHIP IN THAT CONTEXT. HERE AGAIN, A RELAXATION OF REGIONAL TENSIONS THROUGH AN OVER-ALL MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT COULD BE EXPECTED TO IM-
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PROVE INTERNAL SECURITY CONDITIONS WITHIN SYRIA TO THE POINT WHERE THE ASSAD REGIME WOULD FEEL LESS THREATENED AND THEREBY MORE ABLE TO PROVIDE WIDER LEGAL SAFEGUARDS TO ITS CITIZENS. IN THE MEANTIME, SYRIAN ADHERENCE TO THE VIENNA CONVENTION OR TO A BILATERAL CONSULAR CONVENTION WITH THE U.S. WOULD LIKELY HAVE SOME SPILLOVER UTILITY FOR SYRIAN CITIZENS.

(C) U.S. LEVERAGE: (SEE SECTION (E) BELOW.)

(D) LIKELY INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT: NONE TO SPEAK OF.

(E) OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

--EXERT THE LEVERAGE OFFERED THROUGH THREATENING TO CUT, OR ACTUALLY CUTTING OFF, AID PROGRAMS TO SYRIA, AVERAGING OVER DOLS 90 MILLION ANNUALLY WHEN PL 480 IS INCLUDED. THIS COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE SO TRANSPARENTLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE THAT NO SERIOUS OBSERVER OF THE SYRIAN SCENE HAS EVER ARGUED FOR IT. ASIDE FROM THIS, IT COULD SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERMINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT. WE DO NOT RECOMMEND THIS APPROACH.

--WITH REGARD TO THE ISSUE OF SYRIAN JEWRY, CONTINUE OUR PRESENT COURSE OF QUIET, HIGH-LEVEL REPRESENTATIONS TO SYRIAN POLICYMAKERS. THIS IS DONE PRIMARILY BY THE AMBASSADOR AND VISITING U.S. OFFICIALS AND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, BUT PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE ALSO HAVE RAISED THE ISSUE WITH ASSAD. IT REQUIRES THE DEPARTMENT TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE INTERESTED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND WITH JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS IN THE U.S. WE RECOMMEND THAT THIS APPROACH, WHICH HAS ALREADY PRODUCED SIGNIFICANT RESULTS, BE CONTINUED.

--USING THE CARROT APPROACH, ACKNOWLEDGE PRIVATELY AND, IF FEASIBLE, PUBLICLY, ANY SYRIAN PROGRESS IN AMELIORATING
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ITS HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION. SUCH STEPS SHOULD SIMULTANEOUSLY ENCOURAGE THE SYRIANS TO MOVE FORWARD. AN EXAMPLE OF THIS TACTIC IS A RECENT CONFIDENTIAL LETTER TO THE SYRIAN PRESIDENT FROM KEY SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN, EXPRESSING GRATIFICATION AT THE LATEST STEPS TAKEN TO EASE THE SITUATION OF SYRIAN JEWS, BUT ALSO STATING THE HOPE THAT REMAINING DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES WILL BE ENDED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. SECRETARY VANCE'S CLOSED-SESSION TESTIMONY BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES, IN WHICH HE NOTED RECENT POSITIVE SYRIAN ACTIONS ON THE JEWISH QUESTION, IS ALSO HELPFUL SINCE IT HAS A WAY OF LEAKING. WE RECOMMEND THAT THESE AND OTHER RECENT MANIFESTATIONS OF U.S. INTEREST IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN SYRIA (INCLUDING PERSONAL MESSAGES FROM PRESIDENT CARTER TO PRESIDENT ASSAD) BE CONTINUED.

--WE MIGHT ALSO SEEK TO ESTABLISH AN AMERICAN/SYRIAN COMMUNITY OF INTEREST IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS TOUCHING ON HUMAN RIGHTS (E.G., THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, INTERNATIONAL JURISTS CONVENTION, ETC.) THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT IS INTERESTED IN IMPROVING ITS IMAGE IN THE WEST; ITS ASSOCIATION WITH ANY INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS EFFORTS WOULD HAVE A USEFUL SPILLOVER EFFECT IN SYRIA ITSELF. WE RECOMMEND THAT THIS APPROACH BE SET IN MOTION.

--IN THE SAME VEIN, OUR CONTINUED ENCOURAGEMENT OF VISITS BY U.S. AND SYRIAN JOURNALISTS, OFFICIALS, SCHOLARS (INCLUDING PEOPLE OF THE JEWISH FAITH) STIMULATES IMPRESSIVE EFFORTS BY THE ASSAD REGIME TO SHOW ITSELF AND THE COUNTRY TO BEST ADVANTAGE. WE RECOMMEND THAT THIS APPROACH BE CONTINUED.

--IN SHORT, THE OPTIONS RECOMMENDED ABOVE, IF PURSUED IN IMAGINATIVE WAYS, WOULD BE AIMED AT ENCOURAGING PRESENT LIBERALIZING TRENDS IN THE SYRIAN SYSTEM, BUT WOULD AVOID POSING A CHALLENGE WHICH THE DAMASCUS REGIME--FOR REASONS
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OF FACE--WOULD FEEL OBLIGED TO REJECT SUMMARILY AND WHICH WOULD POSSIBLY HURT THE INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS OUR ACTIONS ARE INTENDED TO ASSIST.

2. HOST COUNTRY REACTIONS

THERE HAS BEEN NO ASCERTAINABLE PUBLIC OR OFFICIAL SYRIAN

REACTION TO OUR NEW HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES. OUR CONCERTED, BUT LOW-KEY AND DISCREET, EFFORTS IN DAMASCUS AND ELSEWHERE ON BEHALF OF THE SYRIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY ARE FULLY KNOWN TO THE ASSAD REGIME, WHICH HAS NEITHER REACTED PUBLICLY TO THEM NOR VOICED ANY OBJECTIONS TO US ABOUT THEM IN PRIVATE.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGE

THE SOLE IMPLICATION THAT CAN BE DRAWN FROM THE FOREGOING IS THAT OUR HUMAN RIGHTS OBJECTIVES IN SYRIA ARE FAR BETTER SERVED BY QUIET, PERSISTENT DIPLOMACY, NOT BY CONFRONTATIONAL TACTICS THAT WOULD PROVOKE SYRIAN ANGER AND POSSIBLY PROVE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE FOR THE GOALS WE ARE TRYING TO PROMOTE.

4. OTHER U.S. ACTIONS

NOTHING TO ADD TO THE FOREGOING. VANCE

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